

SENATOR PIRSCH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature. We did hear this in the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, and there...there was some confusion. But I think, first of all, there has to be a disaster, and it has to be a disaster in Nebraska. And if you have a disaster of the magnitude that the American Red Cross is called in, it has to be pretty serious. The American Red Cross is the only, only federally chartered emergency agency in the United States, and it's because of that, of course, that they train their volunteers, and of course they train them on their off hours. And these people are sent only, or requested only if there is a disaster of the magnitude that they would have to be called in, and it would have to be a disaster in Nebraska. Secondly, another requirement would be that that state employee, besides being already a certified Red Cross trained volunteer, that they would have to have the permission of their supervisor. First of all, of course, you'd have to have the training that the American Red Cross would need for that particular disaster, and then you would need to have the permission of your supervisor, whoever that may be. And, of course, there is a limitation on the amount of time that you could get a leave. But these are possibly remote circumstances but, if that should happen, this was a request of the American Red Cross for those people who volunteer and come in when there is a disaster of that magnitude. So I'm going to support this amendment by Senator Schimek.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Pirsch. Senator Robak.

SENATOR ROBAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. I, too, support this amendment. I think Senator Pirsch gave an excellent job of describing the bill. And, Senator Haberman, I would like to just tell you that the Salvation Army, the Goodwill and everything, all those other agencies, disaster work is not their primary work. American Red Cross is mandated by Congress to be at the scene of a disaster. It is mandated by Congress to be there. It doesn't have to have a presidential declaration, you are there. Later on, when they pass all the federal disaster laws, FEMA and other laws came into being the Red...it did not way change the mandate, from Congress, to be at the scene of a disaster. I was Red Cross certified at one time, and I went throughout the country with disaster relief teams. However, this bill does not address going throughout the country on disaster relief teams, it's only in the State of Nebraska.